

Effective Behaviour Support

Overview

Effective Behaviour Support (EBS) (also referred to as Positive Behaviour Intervention) is a student behaviour management system that has as a basic, central philosophy that a system that acknowledges morality, goodness, positive attitudes, pleasant behaviour, etc. will get more mileage than a "punishment" based system. Generally, most student discipline is punitive and focuses all the attention on bad behaviours. In EBS, there is still consequence for bad conduct, but there is a shift to using positive language. For example, instead of "Sit down and be quiet, Trish!" (To use a hypothetical name), we instead say, "I like the way Martine is sitting." "Extrinsic Motivators" (rewards) are offered to students that display appropriate behaviours, " All students without a referral to the office this week will be watching a video while the rest of us finish our apology letters." This can be difficult for us, as humans use four times as much negative language as positive. There is a belief that all but the most extreme behavioural students can be swayed by this approach. Those few in the 5% need special individual interventions and counselling to stay on track.

Proactive Approach to School-Wide Discipline

Schools that implement school-wide systems of effective behavior support focus on taking a team-based system approach and teaching appropriate behavior to all students in the school. Schools that have been successful in building school-wide systems develop procedures to accomplish the following:

1. Behavioral Expectations are Defined.

A small number of clearly defined behavioral expectations are defined in positive, simple, rules.

Examples are:

Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe; or Respect Yourself, Respect Others, and Respect Property.

At Sk'aadgaa Naay, for example, our four expectations are Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Responsible, & Be Respectful

2. Behavioral Expectations are Taught.

The behavioral expectations are taught to all students in the building, and are taught in real world contexts. The goals of the teaching are to take broad expectations (like Be Respectful), and provide specific behavioral examples (In class: being respectful means raising your hand when you want to speak or get help).

For example:

During lunch or in the hall: being respectful means using a person's name when you talk to him or her.

Behavioral expectations are taught using the same teaching formats applied to other curricula. The general rule presented, the rationale for the rule is discussed, positive examples ("right way") are described and rehearsed, and negative examples ("Trish, this might be the wrong way") are described and modeled. Students are given an opportunity to practice the "right way" until they get it.

3. Appropriate Behaviors are Acknowledged.

Once appropriate behaviors have been defined and taught, they need to be acknowledged on a regular basis. Some schools do this through formal systems (tickets, rewards), others do it through social events. Schools that are successful in creating a competent culture typically establish a pattern in which adult interactions with students are "positive" four times as often as they are "negative". Some schools fall into a trap of having positive rewards become an inflationary game with the kids ("I got five gotchas last week, Trish!" --"Yeah, well I got twelve, Martine!")

4. Behavioral Errors are Corrected Proactively.

When students violate behavioral expectations, clear procedures are needed for providing information to them that their behavior was unacceptable, and preventing that unacceptable behavior from resulting in inadvertent rewards. Students, teachers, and principals all should be able to predict what will occur when behavioral errors are identified. Consequences are logical.

For example, if you swear, your consequence must include verbal apology and acknowledgement; a child who litters gets garbage duty, and so on.

5. School decisions are Made Based on Data.

For example, if discipline referrals show that most problems happen at recess, that is where resources and education should be directed, not at buying security cameras for the gym.